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ABSTRACT

Contemporary children must deal with many family problems that children 20 years ago never had to face, including divorce, parental separation, death, working mothers, and economic status. To determine how well current basal reading series reflect the changing American family, the stories of four basal reading series for grades four, five, and six were analyzed and placed in the following categories: (1) sex of the main characters, (2) family structure, (3) economic status, and (4) type of story. The results showed that publishers have made an effort to eliminate sex discrimination, but that the largest percentage of main characters were still Caucasion, middle class children from intact families who live in houses in suburban or rural communities. The stories do not reflect current population statistics in the United States. (Results of the basal story analysis are appended.) (Author/MM)

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CONTEMPORARY CHILDREN

AND

BASAL READING SERIES

by

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(Accepted 4/26/84)

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary children must deal with many family problems and situations which children twenty years ago never had to contend with. Divorce, parental separation, death, working mothers and economic status are some of the major concerns of today's youth. To determine how well today's basal reading series reflect the changing American family, four basal reading series for grades four, five and six were studied. All stories dealing with human characters were examined. The stories were analyzed in the following catagories: (1) sex of the main characters, (2) family structure, (3) economic status and (4) type of story. The results showed that publishers have made an effort to eliminate sex discrimination, but the largest percentage of main characters remain caucasian, middle class children from complete family structures who live in houses in auburban or rural communities. This does not reflect the statistics of today's population as a whole.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

An issue of concern in society is socioeconomic, sexual, and ethnic bias in children's textbooks and literature. This chapter presents the statement of the problem and its hypothesis. It also represents the significance of the problem, the purpose of the study, as well as assumptions and limitations of the project.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This research deals with the question: Do new basal publications deal with the kinds of on going problems faced by children from low socioeconomic backgrounds? The project is a comparative study of four intermediate basal reading series.

HYPOTHESIS

The first hypothesis is that there will be few single-parent families of low socioeconomic background represented in the basal readers surveyed. Secondly, there will be few settings and situations that children from low socioeconomic backgrounds can relate to.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM

Since reading comprehension is partially based on past experiences, children from low socioeconomic backgrounds may

experience comprehension difficulty when reading stories far removed from their background experiences.

Reading socially biased literature will have an emotional impact on the reader's self-concept. A bias presentation of family and social life will influence a child's perception of self-worth. It will also influence role and career expectations of children.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to determine if new basal publications deal with the kinds of on going problems faced by children from low socioeconomic backgrounds. This study wishes to answer these questions: What is the family structure of basal stories? Does the material contain a variety of ethnic characters? What is the socioeconomic status of the characters?

A second purpose of this study was to create an awareness of the problem and perhaps cause a change in the process of selection of future textbooks.

ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

One assumption related to this study was that the books analyzed are representative of most basal series. Another assumption was that socially biased literature influences the reader, also that socially biased literature could impair the reader's personality and self-concept as well as limit their role and career choices.

The accessibility of these basals could have been a limitation.

DEFINITIONS OF IMPORTANT TERMS

Definitions

The following terms and definitions are provided in order to give a comprehensive understanding of the project.

One-parent family. This term refers to a group of people including one parent and his/her children. There is one parent due to divorce, separation, death or never having married.

Complete family. A complete family is a family consisting of a mother, father, and their children.

Extended family. This term is defined as all members of a family not living in the same household such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Socioeconomic. Socioeconomic is defined as a combination of social and economic factors such as salary, housing, and standards of living.

Intermediate basal readers. The use of intermediate basal readers in this study included fourth, fifth, and sixth grade textbooks. The following series were utilized: Ginn Reading Program, 1982 edition,[1] HBJ Bookmark Reading Program K-8, Eagle Edition 1983,[2] Houghton Mifflin Reading Program K-8,

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[1]Theodore Clymer et al. Ginn Reading Program (Massachusetts: Ginn and Company, 1982).

[2]Margaret Early. HBJ Bookmark Reading Program K-8 (New York: Harcourt, Brace Javanovich, Publishers, 1983).

1983 edition,[3] Macmillan Reading Series R, 1982 edition.[4] The levels examined in each series were for grades four, five and six.

SUMMARY

Chapter I presents an introduction to this research project. Its purpose was to determine if new basal publications deal with the on going problems faced by children from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

This chapter incorporates the significance, purpose, assumptions, limitations and definitions of the research project needed in order to implement and carry out the study.

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[3]William K. Durr et al. Houghton Mifflin Reading Program K-8 (Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1983).

[4]Carl B. Smith and Ronald Wardhaugh. Macmillan Reading Series R (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1982).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTER

This chapter highlights a review of related literature on background knowledge and experiences and their relationship to reading comprehension. It also deals with related literature on social, ethnic, and sex bias which have been found to be an influential force in a child's development of self-concept and self-worth. Research presented in this chapter includes current findings, speculations and opinions.

BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCES

It is taken for granted today that background knowledge and experience influence a person's reading comprehension ability. A study by Pearson, Hanson and Gorden[1] found that children who had some knowledge of a topic read a passage on that topic faster and with greater comprehension than those who were unfamiliar with the topic. Kathleen Stevens[2] did a study with ninth grade students from various ability groups. The results of her study support the findings of Pearson, Hanson

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[1]David P. Pearson, Jane Hanson, and Christine Gordon, "The Effect of Background Knowledge on Young Children's Comprehension of Explicity and Implicit Information," Journal of Reading Behavior, 11:201-209, Fall 1979.

[2]Kathleen Stevens, "The Effect of Background Knowledge on the Reading Comprehension of Ninth Graders," Journal of Reading Behavior, 12:151-154, Summer 1980.

and Gordon. She found that the students with some knowledge of the topics on the test she administered read more fluently and comprehended the passage more fully. Her conclusion was that background knowledge was a significant factor for children in all ability groups.

Another researcher, Joseph Kretchmer,[3] did a study to prove that reading tests provided a variety of passages in which students were interested. He found that the test makers did not include subjects such as adolescent problems, peer and school activities, fantasy and city life as topics of passages. Sports and humor were found in only a few of the tests sampled. He found, in the primary tests, that the middle class was the dominant social group used in the passages. He concluded that students from other culture and social groups would have difficulty in comprehending the passages even if they could read every word. This study indicates that even children with extensive background experiences and adequate vocabulary are severly hampered in their performance on reading comprehension tests if the subject matter doesn't match their experiences.

Barbara Taylor's[4] research findings also lend support to the theory that background knowledge is of major importance to comprehension. In her study of third, fourth and fifth

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[3]Joseph C. Kretchmer, "Subject Matter a Factor in Testing Comprehension," Reading World, 11:275-285, May 1972.

[4]Barbara Taylor, "Good and Poor Reader's Recall of Familiar and Unfamiliar Text," Journal of Reading Behavior, Volume XI, Number 4, pp. 375-380, Winter 1979.

graders of several ability and reading levels, she found that those students with prior knowledge recalled more on a fairly incomprehensible story. Poor readers did experience more difficulty with the material but this could be a result of poor word attack skills. She concluded that prior knowledge is used by readers whenever possible to process and recall the text.

An earlier study dealt with the effects that background knowledge has on comprehension of implicit and explicit information.[5] This study discussed Rumelhart and Ortony's schema theory as it related to comprehension. It stated that schema is a framework for the classification of concepts presented in a passage and that a well developed schema enables the reader to fill in the gaps not completely specified in the text. Two conclusions were drawn from the results of this study. The first was that children with well developed schemas on a topic were able to answer more questions. Secondly, prior knowledge facilitates comprehension particularly in inferential comprehension.

Arne Sippola's[6] research dealt with whether basal stories were related to the "here and now" or if the stories were distantly removed from background experiences and knowledge of the reader. He found that the further removed the stories

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[5] _____, "The Effect of Background Knowledge on Young Children's Comprehension of Explicit and Implicit Information," Journal of Reading Behavior, Volume 11, Number 3, pp. 201-209, Fall, 1979.

[6] Arne E. Sippola, "Story Distance in Basal Readers," Reading Teacher, 35:550-553, February, 1982.

were from the reader's background the less they were likely to address the problems facing contemporary youth. He also concluded that "here and now" fiction, such as the Judy Blume stories, did address contemporary problems. This made the stories more interesting and more easily understood and related to by the reader. Primary grade basals were found to contain stories that were more closely related to the background of the readers, but as the audience grew older, the stories moved away from the "here and now." It was assumed that this was because young children are more tied to the present and can't conceptualize prehistoric, molecular or other abstract material until they are about eleven. As the child grows older the ability to handle abstraction increases and therefore they can deal with material less related to the "here and now."

SEX ROLE STEREOTYPING

Many studies have been undertaken to determine to what extent role models and literature influence sex role preferences. Lawrence Kohberg[7] stated that at the age of four or five, children begin to notice adult sexual differences. This first awareness of sexual differences usually relates to size and strength. He indicates that sex role preferences are not

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[7]Lawrence Kohberg, "A Cognitive Developmental Analysis of Children," Chapter 5 in The Development of Sex Differences, Eleanor E. Maccoby, ed. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1966, pp. 100-101.

established at any particular stage and that they may shift at different ages.

Brown[8] concurred with Kohberg that sex role preferences may shift at varying ages. In another article he discussed sex role identification.[9] He defined it as a basic process in which a child learns to think, feel and act like one sex in contrast to the other. Once the identification has beem made, it is infrequent that a shift to the other sex occurs.

SEXISM IN BASAL READERS

A child gets his first view of the world outside his family, neighborhood and classroom through basal readers. A study to determine to what extent basal readers can influence children was conducted by Bloom, Waite and Zimet.[10] They first studied the content of the stories in first grade basal readers. Then the children were asked to respond to the stories. These responses were examined to determine their interest in reading. The results of the study showed that the basals examined stereotyped woman's roles and presented an unrealistic approach to real-life situations.

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[8]Daniel G. Brown, "Masculinity-Feminity in Children," Journal of Consulting Psychology, 21:197-202, 1957.

[9]Daniel G. Brown, "Sex Role Development in a Changing Culture," Psychological Bulletin, 55:232-242, July, 1958.

[10]Gaston E. Bloom, Richard R. Waite and Sara Zimet, "Content of First Grade Reading Books," The Reading Teacher, 21:317-323, January, 1968.

Child, Potter and Levine conducted one of the first studies to deal with sex role stereotyping in basal readers.[11] They studied the content of third grade readers published between 1930 and 1946. A decided difference in sex roles was noted. Females were portrayed as inactive, lazy and helpless. Their roles consisted of motherhood, housework, with some references to teachers and nurses found. Males, on the other hand, were portrayed as strong, active and adventurous. A variety of occupations were associated with male characters.

A study conducted by Britton in 1975 examined sexism in twenty different reading series.[12] Two hundred forty-four reading texts were examined using criteria from a previous study. The texts were the newest editions to each series. These newer texts were the publishers answer to criticism of the older series. The results showed little improvement in the representation of women in character traits or roles.

A more recent study of sex role portrayal was conducted by Rupley, Garcia and Longnion.[13] They stated that whether the current American basal series are presenting a nonstereo-

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[11] Irwin L. Child, Elmer H. Potter and Estelle M. Levine, "Children's Textbooks and Personality Development," Psychology Monographs, 60:1-7, 45-53, February, 1946.

[12] Gwyneth E. Britton, "Danger: State Adopted Tests May Be Hazardous to Our Future," The Reading Teacher, 29:52-58, October, 1975.

[13] William R. Rupley, Jesus Garcia and Bonnie Longnion, "Sex Role Portrayal in Reading Materials: Implications for the 1980s." The Reading Teacher, pp. 786-791, April, 1981.

typical view is still debatable. They concluded that textbooks are generally sexist and that what learners read may affect how they view themselves and others.

Horner's[14] article to publishers states that children continually evaluate themselves and try to imitate the dominant stereotypes presented in the textbooks. She also discussed the fact that when children are faced with a conflict between interests and ability that are inconsistent with the stereotypes, most tend to decide in favor of the norm. She also emphasized that educators should counteract stereotyping to promote individual aspirations and choices no matter what the child's background.

FAMILY STATUS

Park's[15] article speaks of the traumas children must endure when faced with divorce, separation, or death of a parent. He gives many suggestions on how teachers can directly or indirectly help children through this time of crisis. One of his suggestions was to find literature that shows characters coping with the same situations and emotions.

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[14]Matina S. Horner, "Guidelines for Creating a Positive Sexual and Racial Image in Educational Materials," (Macmillan Publishing Company: New York, 1975.)

[15]Damon Parker, "When the Family Comes Apart: What Schools Can Do," The National Elementary Principal, 59:66-75, October, 1979.

In his article, Dr. Kealey[16] states that stories communicate values to students and that readers present a stereotypical view of the family. He reminds educators of the present day family structure and that today's children need to read about families with the same structure. His study of second grade readers confirmed his theory that today's readers are both socially and sexually biased in their presentation of women and the family. He urges educators to evaluate how the family is presented and to consider if the values presented agree with the school's philosophy before adopting any new textbook series.

Sutton conducted a study of basal readers and how the family was portrayed.[17] She found there was no mention of step-parents and few references to working mothers. Evan's[18] findings in her examination of basal readers, concurs with Sutton. She found that few stories dealt with one-parent families and only one story dealt with divorce.

SUMMARY

Research has shown a definite correlation between background experience and comprehension. Students with a well

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[16]Robert J. Kealey, "The Image of the Family in Second-grade Readers," Momentum. 11:16-19, October, 1980.

[17]Jane H. Sutton, "The American Family as Seen in Basal Readers on the 1977 Indiana State Adoption List," April, 1981.

[18]Nancy Evans, "A Study of How the Family Is Portrayed in Basal Readers," April, 1982.

developed schema or framework for classiciation of concepts presented in material are able to answer more comprehension questions. This background knowledge helps the reader process the information presented, therefore, recall improves.

Research studies on sexism in basal readers showed a need for male and female roles to be depicted more realistically. Studies on the family status shown in basals have concluded that different family structures must also be depicted more realistically.

If students enter school from an a typical family structure, where adults do not fit the norm portrayed in their basals, the chances for the development of good comprehension skills is somewhat diminished since they are unable to call upon their own background experiences for help in dealing with the text.

A variety of family life situations and adult role models must be presented in order for the child to feel a relation to his reading experience to make his reading experience more personal and therefore more meaningful.

More research is needed in this area.

CHAPTER III

THE DESIGN OF THE STUDY

INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTER

This chapter gives a complete description of the study. It includes the procedures used, sources of data, methods employed in the study, as well as data gathering techniques employed.

THE PROCEDURES OF THE STUDY

This study was designed to measure to what extent recent basal texts present stories with situations and characters to which today's children can relate.

All textbooks were analyzed following the outline below:

Appendix A - Chart I - Character Analysis

Section 1 - Main Characters and Total Number of Stories

Boys - Girls - Boys and Girls

Adults: Males - Females - Males and Females

Elderly: Males - Females - Males and Females

Handicapped: Males - Females - Males and Females

Section 2 - Nationality of Main Characters

Caucasian

Black

Hispanic

Oriental

Mixed Race

Appendix B - Chart II - Family Structure

Section 1 - Family

Child w/two parents

Child and mother

Child and father

Child and siblings

Child and grandmother

Child and grandfather

Child and other relatives

Child and other

Husband and wife only

Extended family

Foster parents and child

Adoptive parents and child

Section 2 - Significant Adults

Aunt custodial

Aunt non-custodial

Uncle custodial

Uncle non-custodial

Grandfather non-cutodial

Grandmother non-custodial

Babysitter

Teacher

Religious leader

Section 3 - Family Situations

Parental death

Any death

Parental Divorce

Any divorce

Parental remarriage

Appendix C - Chart III - Economic Status

Section 1 - Employment Status

Trade: father - mother - both

Non-trade: father - mother - both

One parent working

Both parents working

Unemployed: father - mother - both

Unknown work status

Section 2 - Type of Housing

City: apartment - house - condo

Suburbs: apartment - house - condo - trailer - other

Rural: farm - other

Section 3 - Setting

Home

Neighborhood

School

Business

Party

Other recreation

Other

Appendix D - Chart IV - Type of Story

Real-life

Factual

Adventure

Science Fiction

Autobiography

Biography

Fantasy

This textbook evaluation format was patterned to include information from Dr. Robert Kealey's[1] survey of family relationships, which was published in October, 1980 Momentum magazine. Jane Sutton's[2] study of April, 1981 and Nancy Evan's[3] study of April, 1982 were also used in determining the categories to be evaluated.

SOURCES OF DATA

Fourth, fifth and sixth grade readers from four series were selected for study. Ginn Reading Program, 1982, HBJ Bookmark Reading Program K-8, Eagle Edition 1983, Houghton Mifflin Reading Program K-8, 1983, Macmillan Reading Series R 1982. These particular series were selected as they represented a sampling of other reading series.

A total of 291 stories were read and analyzed. Only stories dealing with human characters, fictional and non-fictional, were analyzed.

[1]Robert J. Kealey, "The Image of the Family in Second-grade Readers," Momentum. 11:16-19, Octber, 1980.

[2]Jane H. Sutton, "The American Family as Seen in Basal Readers of the 1977 Indiana State Adoption List," April, 1981.

[3]Nancy Evans, "A Study of How the Family Is Portrayed in Basal Readers," April, 1982.

METHODS OF GATHERING DATA

All stories containing human characters were read in all four series. A general classification system was developed for use in a content analysis. Each story was recorded and charted.

Chart I - Character Analysis, was divided into two sections (see Appendix A). The first section included tallies set up to record the amount of stories that focused on male and female characters.

The nationality of the main characters were recorded in the second section.

Chart II - Family Structure was divided into three sections. The first section included tallies of different types of family structures appearing in the stories.

Tallies of significant adults appearing in the stories were recorded in section two.

Section three represents the tallies of family situations that appeared as themes in the stories (see Appendix B).

Chart III - Economic Status was divided into three sections. Tallies of the employment status of the family, both male and female, were recorded in section one. The second section included tallies of the types of housing in which the main characters lived.

Story settings were recorded and tallied in section three (see Appendix C).

Chart IV - Types of stories (see Appendix D) was used to record the specific types of stories presented in each series at each reading level.

DESCRIPTION OF DATA-GATHERING TECHNIQUES

The number of books in each series and the stories were counted. Each story was read to identify relationships, economic status, settings, type of stories, and sex of the main characters.

Totals were tabulated from the lists in the different categories. These totals were used to interpret the results. A further analysis was conducted among the four series to determine comparative data.

SUMMARY

Chapter three describes in detail the design of the study which included the procedures used, the sources of data, the methods employed, as well as the data-gathering techniques.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This chapter deals with and presents the data derived from the study and analysis of these data

ANALYSIS OF DATA

A total of two hundred ninety-one stories from four basal reading series were surveyed. All stories dealing with human characters, fictional and non-fictional, were read in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grade text of each series.

This analysis, as shown in Table I, indicates that basal text publishers have apparently tried to equalize the percentage of male and female main characters in their texts.

TABLE I

SEX OF MAIN CHARACTERS

	Boys	Girls	Adult Males	Adult Females
Ginn	41%	34%	14%	5%
HBJ	28%	31%	22%	19%
Houghton Mifflin	41%	34%	13%	13%
Macmillan	39%	37%	17%	7%
Totals	38%	35%	17%	11%

In all, but the HBJ series, male characters were featured slightly more often than female characters.

In all the stories surveyed, only ten main characters were physically handicapped, three boys and five girls. None of the main characters were elderly.

As can be seen in Table II, characters of Caucasian descent were presented most frequently as the main characters.

TABLE II

NATIONALITY OF MAIN CHARACTERS

	Caucasian	Black	Hispanic	Indian	Oriental	Mixed	No Mention
Ginn	65%	11%	9%	4%	5%	-	5%
HBJ	57%	17%	9%	7%	4%	2%	4%
Houghton Mifflin	62%	16%	8%	5%	8%	1%	1%
Macmillan	63%	11%	7%	10%	7%	1%	1%
Totals	58%	13%	8%	7%	6%	1%	3%

Of the total number of stories, only fifty-one percent dealt with contemporary children, as illustrated in Table III. The majority of these stories centered around complete families.

TABLE III

FAMILY STATUS

	Two-parent	One-parent	Extended	Foster	Custodial Relatives	No Mention
Ginn	32%	16%	5%	-	3%	43%
HBJ	43%	11%	-	-	-	46%
Houghton Mifflin	47%	15%	9%	-	3%	27%
Macmillan	54%	6%	5%	1%	-	35%
Totals	44%	12%	5%	0%	1%	34%

It is assumed that the authors of the basal series merely ignored the family status in forty-three percent of the stories because it was irrelevant to the plot.

In the category of significant adults, grandmothers are mentioned seventeen times, adult males eleven times, not including grandfathers who were mentioned seven times. There were also six aunts and six uncles mentioned along with six teachers, two adult females and four male coaches.

The greatest majority of the stories surveyed, as reported in Table IV, made no mention of the occupations of either or both parents. No stories dealt with unemployment, job seeking, or public assistance.

TABLE IV

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

	Father/trade	Father/nontrade	Mother/trade	Mother/nontrade
Ginn	6	15	2	6
HBJ	3	8	1	3
Houghton Mifflin	11	20	0	11
Macmillan	11	8	0	4
Totals	31	51	3	24

A total of ninety-eight stories mentioned working parents. Sixty-six percent of the stories made no mention at all of the working status of the parents. In one-parent families, only sixteen mothers worked out of the twenty-eight single mothers. Only eleven mothers in the one hundred twenty-nine two-parent families worked. None of the stories mentioned what the

children did or how they were cared for while their parents were at work. Seven stories were about children spending summer vacations with relatives, but only two of these stories mentioned that it was because the parents were working.

Custodial grandmothers were mentioned seven times. Other custodial relatives included one older brother, one older sister, one aunt and uncle, and two grandfathers. Both grandfathers were mentioned in the stories with the grandmothers. The aunt and uncle were in the same story.

In family situations, the extended family is mentioned fifteen times, or five percent of the stories. Only one story dealt with a foster home and this was only mentioned briefly. Parental death is mentioned in fourteen stories, only seven of those stories were about contemporary children. One story was about a young girl and her relationship with her dying grandmother. One story mentioned the death of a sibling. Parental divorce was mentioned only twice in all the stories. Parental remarriage was also mentioned twice, but not in the stories relating to parental divorce. Only one out of two hundred ninety-one stories dealt in any manner with the feelings of the children whose parents were divorcing and how the children coped with the situation. There were never any refernces made to children of never married parents.

In story settings, only one hundred ten, or thirty-eight percent specifically mentioned the setting, as can be seen in Table V. Fifty-two stories took place in the city and only six percent of these stories mentioned that the home was an

TABLE V

STORY SETTINGS

	City	Rural	House	Apart-ment	Farm	Island	Neighbor-hood	School
Ginn	16%	19%	15%	7%	4%	3%	4%	2%
HBJ	6%	6%	4%	2%	7%	2%	6%	4%
Houghton Mifflin	24%	32%	34%	10%	9%	1%	8%	5%
Macmillan	21%	19%	24%	5%	4%	-	5%	6%
Totals	18%	20%	29%	6%	6%	1%	5%	4%

apartment. Twenty-nine percent of all the stories took place in the house of the main character. Sixteen stories took place in city neighborhoods, seventeen were centered on farms or campsites. Thirteen stories focused the activity around school or after school activities. Three stories in the Houghton Mifflin series centered around parental businesses, and four stories took place on islands. The largest percentage of stories took place in rural settings.

A variety of story types was evident, as noted in Table VI. The largest percentage of the stories were factual. Most

TABLE VI

TYPE OF STORY

	Real-life	Factual	Adventure	Fantash	Science Fiction	Mystery
Ginn	34%	26%	24%	14%	-	3%
HBJ	15%	56%	11%	17%	1%	-
Houghton Mifflin	35%	20%	27%	14%	4%	-
Macmillan	25%	42%	18%	11%	4%	-
Totals	29%	34%	21%	13%	2%	1%

factual stories dealt with historical facts and biographical information. Only eighty-three stories were stories that could possibly happen to contemporary children. Adventures, fantasy, science fiction and mysteries made up the remaining thirty-seven percent of the stories surveyed.

SUMMARY

The data shows that the authors of the basal readers surveyed, have now utilized a number of stories which have female main characters, but male main characters are still dominant by ten percent. The main characters came from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, with fifty-eight percent centering on Caucasian characters.

The survey reflected a broad variety of family life styles and situations. The majority of the families, forty-four percent, were two-parent. A significant percentage, thirty-four percent, of the stories made no reference to the family of the main character.

A large percentage of the stories in the basal readers surveyed had nothing to do with the family at all. History, science, animal stories, poetry, and reading skill development were covered. These entries were not included in the survey. Only fifty-one percent of all the stories surveyed were about contemporary children and their families.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTER

Chapter five includes a restatement of the problem, a brief description of the procedures used, major findings and their interpretation, conclusions and recommendations for further research.

RESTATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The question originally stated was, "Do new basal publications deal with the kinds of on going problems faced by children from low socioeconomic backgrounds?"

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES USED

The main procedures employed in this study were a content analysis and a general classification system. The classification system based on preliminary observations was used to analyze story content, characters, relationships, economic status, and setting. Tallies from the lists in the different categories were used to interpret the results. Categories for the classifications were based on relevant research as well as the researcher's own selections.

The four reading series were selected because they represented a sampling of other reading series.

PRINCIPLE FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The data analysis in this study suggests that publishers, in their latest series, have made an effort to eliminate sex discrimination both through the story content and by providing more nearly equal numbers of male and female main characters.

Of the stories surveyed, fifty-eight percent of the chacters were caucasian, 13% black, 8% hispanic and 17% were from other ethnic backgrounds. A greater percentage of blacks and hispanics fall into low socioeconomic category and in the innercity schools. Since children learn affectively, as well as cognitively, from what they read, it would appear that publishers need to include more stories about these ethnic groups for use in innercity schools.

The U.S. Bureau of the Census projected that forty-eight percent of all children born in 1980 will live a "considerable time" with only one parent, before they reach the age of eighteen. This study found that only twelve percent of the stories mentioned one-parent families. This shows a considerable discrepancy between basal publications and the general population. Only one of the 291 stories surveyed dealt directly with parental divorce and the children's reaction to this family crisis. This could lead children of divorce who read these basals to have poor self and family images since they do not conform to the norm portrayed in these basals. More stories need to be included with content specifically dealing with divorce and parental remarriage to help children of single-parent and step-parent families understand that

others do have similar situations in their lives. This could not only improve a child's self-concept, but could also help children to find new ways to cope with their own feelings of rejection and anxiety in similar situations.

Few stories mentioned the work or economic status of the family. Only twenty-seven stories mentioned working mothers. This is far from today's reality. It is assumed that the work status of parents was not mentioned because it was irrelevant to the plot of the stories. Only two of the stories mentioned difficulty in "making ends meet."

A broad variety of social settings was evident throughout the basals surveyed.

Approximately half the stories surveyed for this study did deal with contemporary children. The remaining stories were based in the past, mostly dealing with historical facts of this country's and its people's development.

The conclusion of this study is that basal authors and publishers are including few stories that deal with the kinds of on going problems and situations faced by children from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research in the area of family structure and economic status is needed. This study was limited to four publishers' intermediate reading materials. A continuation of this examination should be completed for the entire series of each publisher to determine if the series of each is comparable. A further examination of other basal series is also suggested.

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APPENDIX

Character Analysis

Series	Ginn			HBJ			HM			Macmillian			Key to Book Titles	Level
Book Title	B	R	F	N	T	G	O	A	E	Y	X	W	Ginn	
Main Characters													B - Barefoot Island	4
Boys	7	11	10	4	6	4	9	12	11	12	10	11	R - Ride the Sunrise	5
Girls	9	7	8	5	7	3	8	12	6	10	10	8	F - Flights of Color	6
Boys+Girls	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	Harcourt Brace Javanovich	
Adult Males	4	3	6	2	3	5	3	3	4	1	6	6	N - New Frontiers	4
Adult Females	1	2	2	1	3	4	2	3	5	0	3	3	T - Blazing Trails	5
Elderly Males	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	G - Golden Voyages	6
Elderly Females	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	Houghton Mifflin	
Handicapped Males	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	E - Beacons	6
Handicapped Females	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	O - Gateways	4
Nationality													A - Banners	5
Caucasian	15	11	22	8	13	10	12	17	19	14	20	19	Macmillian	
Black	2	4	2	3	4	2	4	5	4	5	2	2	Y - Rhymes & Reasons	4
Hispanic	2	3	3	0	1	4	2	3	1	1	4	1	X - Echoes of Time	5
Oriental	2	1	1	1	1	0	2	2	2	3	2	1	W - Catch the Wind	6
American Indian	1	2	0	1	1	2	2	2	0	2	2	4		
Mixed Race	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0		
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		

Appendix B - Chart II

Family Structure

Book Titles	B	R	F	N	T	G	O	A	E	Y	X	W	totals
Family Structure													
Child w/two parents	13	7	4	7	9	7	12	15	10	13	21	11	129
Child w/mother	2	1	2		3		1	4	1	1	1	1	17
Child w/father		4	3		2	1	1	4	1			2	18
Child w/siblings			2	1	1	1							5
Child w/grandma				2		2				2		1	7
Child w/grandpa				2									2
Child w/other relative			2				1	1					4
Child w/other													0
Husband & Wife only			1				1	1	1			2	6
Extended family	1	1	2				2	1	4	4			15
Child w/foster parent												1	1
Significant Adults													
Aunt custodial	1												1
Aunt non-custodial		1						1	2	1			5
Uncle custodial	1												1
Uncle non-custodial		1			1			1	1	1			5
Grandma non-cust.	1		1			2	1	1	2	1	1		10
Grandpa "		1					1			1	1		4
Babysitter													
Teacher	1		1		1		1		2				6
Coach							1		1	1	1		4
Religious Leader													
Other							2		4	1	1		8
Family Situations													
Parental death	1	1	2		2	1		2	2	1	1	1	14
Any death					2					1			3
Parental divorce												2	2
Parental remarriage			1									1	2
				40									

Appendix C - Chart III

Employment Status													
Trade - Father	4	2			2	1	4	2	5	4	4	3	
" Mother	2			1		1							
Non-trade - Father	3	5	7		1	7	7	10	3	1	2	5	
" Mother	1	2	3			1	3	5	3	1	1	2	
Unemployed - Father													
" Mother													
One-parent working	8	7	9	1	3	8	14	16	11	5	6	9	
Two parents working	2	2	1			2		1		1	1	1	
UnKnown work Status													
Type of Housing													
City - house	7	3	3	2	3	3	7	4	4	4	3	5	
apartment	1				1	1		1					
condo.													
Suburbs - house	5	4	6	6	2	1	4	2	2	4	3	3	
apartment		1						1			2		
condo													
other	2						1			3	3	2	
Rural - Farm	2	1	2	1		1	2	1	2	1			
Other	12	2			2	2	4	2	3	1	2	3	
Setting													
Home	2	6	3	3	1	2	4	4	1	2	2	2	
Neighborhood (City + Suburbs)	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	6	6	3	1		
School	1		2		1	1	1			2	1	2	
Business								2	1				
Party		1										1	
Other recreation	3			1			2				2		
Other		6	6	1	2	1	1	2	4	1	2	3	
Book Titles	B	R	F	N	T	G	O	A	E	Y	X	W	

Type of Story

Series	Ginn			HBJ			HM			Macmillian			Totals
Book Titles	B	R	F	N	T	G	O	A	E	Y	X	W	
Real life	11	8	6	3	1	4	9	13	6	7	9	6	83
Factual	5	4	10	7	14	10	6	2	8	9	13	13	101
Adventure	3	8	7	2	3	1	3	14	4	5	4	6	60
Science Fiction						1			3		3		7
Fantasy	2	3	5	2	4	3	5	1	5	4	2	3	39
Mystery	2												2
Tolal Number of Stories	23	23	28	14	22	19	23	30	26	26	30	28	291

Appendix D - Chart IV